DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 288 847 SP 029 611

AUTHOR Dougan, Pat; Rogers, Lorelei
TITLE Collaborative Efforts in Dealing with Child Abuse. A Teacher In-Service Model.
PUB DATE 2 Dec 87
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Staff Development Council (19th, Seattle, WA, November 30-December 4, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Abuse; *College School Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Program Effectiveness; *Program Evaluation; School Community Relationship; School Responsibility; Sexual Abuse; Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS Canada

ABSTRACT

Recognizing the necessity of cooperation between human service organizations and schools in dealing with child abuse, a collaborative teacher inservice model has been developed in Calgary, Canada. In addition to staff development mechanisms in the Calgary school districts, the University of Calgary has established an inservice project on treatment and prevention of child abuse. This report offers a description of the course design and a brief evaluation of its effectiveness as well as suggestions on how improvements can be made in delivering child abuse inservice programs. A comparison is made between this inservice model and a similar model developed in Georgia. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED288847

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS IN DEALING WITH CHILD ABUSE
A TEACHER IN-SERVICE MODEL

prepared by

Pat Dougan, Alberta Children's Hospital
Lorelei Rogers, The University of Calgary

presented at
The National Staff Development Council
19th Annual Conference
Seattle, Washington
December 2, 1987

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SP 029 611

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L. Rogers

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH CHILD ABUSE

Who are the human service workers who deal with child abuse? Who are the human service workers responsible for the identification and verification of child abuse cases? Who is the human service worker most likely to receive a disclosure of abuse? Answering just these three questions gives some indication of the complexity of the relationships at work in dealing with child physical and sexual abuse cases.

THE PROBLEM:

In Calgary, like other places throughout North America, there has been an ever-increasing awareness of child abuse. Over time a number of human service agencies developed response mechanisms to assist in educating various segments of the public concerning this serious problem. In Calgary two of the most active agencies have been the Child Abuse Treatment Program of the Alberta Children's Hospital and the Calgary Sexual Assault Centre. During the past several years both these agencies have, on request, provided information regarding child abuse detection, intervention and prevention to public and professional groups. With the heightened awareness of child sexual abuse in particular it became increasingly apparent that more systematic efforts

were required. At the same time school boards in and around Calgary were becoming increasingly concerned about the unevenness of response by schools in their jurisdictions. This focus on the schools is a reasonable one since "the clearest channel for reaching children who need help is through the schools" (Downer, 1987).

TEACHER IN-SERVICE:

All the school districts in the Calgary area have well developed staff development mechanisms and teacher/consultants assigned responsibilities for the delivery of appropriate in-service opportunities. In addition there is another, somewhat unique deliverer of in-service. The Faculty of Education at The University of Calgary has a strong commitment to continuing professional education and in 1979 established an In-service Project to provide such opportunities to educators in Calgary and area.

THE EDIS COURSE:

The Educational In-service credit course format has been designed to respond to the felt needs of individual educators. The courses are twenty hour university credit courses (rather than the usual 40 hours assigned to courses within the Faculty of Education) at the senior undergraduate level. Where appropriate they can be applied to

bacchalareate, professional diploma and masters programs. They are also accepted by the provincial governing body for advancement in salary placement. Graded Completed Requirements or Fail they are designed to make clear the linkages between theory and practice. Courses are delivered at times and locations suitable for practicing teachers. Over their eight year history the courses have proven popular with teachers and successful in introducing teachers to innovations and developments in their craft.

Participant profiles developed for teachers who avail themselves of these courses follow closely along the lines of the profiles drawn by Joyce, Howey and Yager in their 1980 study. They found teachers willing to participate in in-service to be "...predominately female, well into their thirties, and the majority [having] at least ten years experience in education. ... nearly half [having] achieved a master's degree..." (Yarger, Howey, Joyce, 1980). In the profiles drawn in Calgary it was also evident that the teacher involved in The University of Calgary in-service efforts

> "...is likely to be female (3:1) with a median teaching experience of nine years. If the participant is female she is most likely to be an elementary school teacher while male participants are more likely to come from secondary schools and/or administration. Most have two degrees and see teaching as a lifetime profession. When asked to describe their own teaching abilities and the vigour of their careers on ten point scales (adequate - to - excellent and stagnant - to - vigorous) none placed themselves below the mid-point on the scale and most saw themselves as 8's and 9's." (Rogers, 1984)

It was reasonable then to assume that such teachers would be likely candidates for enhanced work in an area as sensitive as coping with child abuse.

With this target group in mind the urban and rural school boards, The Faculty of Education and representatives from child abuse treatment and prevention agencies came together in the spring of 1985 to develop a coordinated response to

the issue of teacher in-service and child abuse. It was hoped that such a cooperative effort would prevent fragmentation and/or duplication of already taxed services while at the same time offering a unique and expanded response to identified needs.

The initial planning focus was on the development of realistic goals and objectives for a cooperatively taught, community-based course in coping with child abuse. With this starting point the planning group of nine women discussed philosophies of intervention and prevention; issues of moral, ethical and legal responsibilities; players in the field; and, materials and resources being marketted and used. The result was commitment to a set of goals and objectives that would be used by each of three school districts to tailor in-service responses suited to their district. Those responses became EDIS 551.09 Teachers and Administrators Coping With Child Abuse.

EDIS 551.09

While the course content and format were relatively structured it was obvious that variations would and should occur since the course would be offered simultaneously in both rural and urban settings. This reflected a desire to involve local community resources so that participants could meet and talk to helpers directly involved in child abuse

management. The Calgary Separate School Board required teacher participation in this course prior to authorizing their involvement in primary prevention; i.e., delivering child safety programming. The Calgary Public Board's response was spearheaded by a high profile family life educator while the rural school area utilized a parent as a member of the instructional team and made special efforts to ensure the attendance of members of the ministerial association because of their unique role in counselling in rural communities.

All other in-service responses did not end when The University of Calgary credit course began. As the profiles indicate not all teachers would be reached by that approach. School boards continued with their own varied responses but, where duplication was likely teachers were referred to the EDIS course. When agencies received requests that would call for a duplication of effort teacher clients were again referred to the EDIS course. To date this course has been offered eight times to approximately 180 registrants.

EVALUATION:

Given the time and energy commitment necessary to deliver this course the sponsoring agencies all agreed that evaluation was needed to determine effectiveness, efficiency and impact. In September, 1986, an informal survey designed to take some measure of participant profile, knowledge and attitude was undertaken with the eighteen participants at the completion of the course.

Profile results were similar to those reported earlier in this paper; that is, participants were mostly female (3:1) with a mean age of 37.5 years and an average of nearly 9 years teaching experience.

Other survey results indicated that all except one participant strongly believed that child abuse should be reported to child welfare authorities, but less than half knew if their school had a reporting policy. 61% felt their school administration would support their involvment in child abuse cases while 22% remained ambivalant. Only one respondent in this sample had conducted a presentation on child abuse to her students but all teachers stated they would be willing to do so in the future. Less than one-half felt they had any role in assisting the rehabilitiation of abusing parents. All teachers reported that they enrolled

in the course primarily to improve their own knowledge and skill levels as opposed to meeting university or school board requirements. All registrants acknowledged personal concern for abused children and nearly all felt a professional responsibility (Dougan, 1987).

While most of teacher feedback about the course was positive it was decided, with participant consent, to conduct formal pre-post course evaluation in April, 1987. A literature search was conducted using the discriptors child abuse, teacher training, staff development and evaluation. Search results were, in the main, disappointing but one interesting article was located.

Written by Dr. Ann Hazzard, Emory University School of Medicine, and appearing in Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, winter, 1984, the article offered parallels to what the Calgary investigators hoped to do. Titled "Training Teachers to Identify and Intervene with Abused Children" the article detailed a study conducted by Dr. Hazzard to determine the effectiveness of in-service training in the child abuse area. When contacted Dr. Hazzard was very willing to share her instruments and research experience.

THE INSTRUMENTS:

Five instruments were used first by Dr. Hazzard and then by the Calgary group in determining a) effectiveness; and, by inference, b) improvements that can be made in delivering child abuse in-service. They consisted of:

I. Demographics -- administered only at the beginning of the in-service course. It determines the sex, age, marital status and family situation of the participant along with her teaching position, level of education and previous training in the area of child abuse.

II. Disclosure -- also administered only at the beginning of the course and designed to ascertain how many disclosures of child abuse the teacher has already dealt with; the reaction to them and whether or not the participant uses corporal punishment in her class.

III. Information -- administered pre and post. It is a 38 item True/False/Don't Know measure of information held by the participant. A sample item is "Setting fires is a common behavior of sexually abused boys." True False Don't Know

IV. Opinions -- administered pre and post. A 26 item questionnaire, participants respond on a four-point scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" to such items as "Child abuse is less widespread than the media makes it out to be."

V. Situational Vignettes -- designed to be a measure of the retention of information and attitudes acquired at the time of the course. Administered at some interval following the course the eight vignettes describe situations which may or may not be child abuse incidents. Participants are asked to identify behaviors that may be indicative of a problem; make a judgement of the likelihood of child abuse and suggest appropriate interventions.

THE GEORGIA STUDY:

The Hazzard study focussed on 104 elementary and junior high school teachers half of whom participated in a one day (six hour) training workshop on child abuse while the other half provided a control group for the study.

Participants were all grade four, five and six teachers from four elementary schools along with all health education teachers in two junior high schools. Substitutes were provided, the workshop was free of charge and the teachers received in-service credit for it.

The questionnaires were administered prior to the workshop and again one week later with the self-report section being administered six months after the in-service experience.

Major findings included the fact that the workshop group showed increased knowledge about child abuse and developed more sympathetic attitudes toward the abusive parent. The six-month follow-up using self-report revealed no significant difference between workshop and control groups in the number of child abuse cases identified and reported. It must be noted that the Calgary researchers believe that disclosure, or lack thereof, does not provide an accurate measure of the success of a training program.

Hazzard also reported that there were increased instances of teachers talking with individual students to determine if child abuse was occurring; more instances of child abuse presentations to whole classes; a decrease in the use of corporal punishment and more discussion of child abuse with colleagues in the group of teachers who attended the workshop. (The self-reporting instrument used in Georgia was replaced in Calgary by the vignette segment.)

THE CALGARY STUDY:

The Calgary study is in its beginning stages and therefore this report should be seen as an interim one.

The first group of teachers (N = 22) in the study attended a course that was conducted on two weekends in April, 1987, with sessions held on Friday evenings from 6 to 9 pm and on Saturdays from 9 am to 3:30 pm. Hence the sample was different from the Georgia group in that they received no release time and, indeed, paid a registration fee of approximately $75.00 to attend the course. 18 teachers participating in a course on schools and family law at the same time were selected as a control group. The questionnaires were administered in the first 45 minutes of the course and again in the last half hour. The vignettes were mailed to participants four months following the course and are still being returned at this writing.

Perusal of the demographic section caused the termination of the schools and family law group as a control. The reason: most of them had already taken an earlier section of the child abuse course! While this was discouraging it may also be seen as informative. It suggests that teachers who are charting their own continuing professional education path will choose topics that are of similar focus -- at least until their thirst or capacitiy for information in the area is satisfied. It might be inferred that the continuing interest in family law reflects back on the original child abuse course.

The Calgary group consisted of 21 females and one male. The mean age was 40.5 and 63.6% were married while another 18.2% were divorced or separated. 14 members of the group had children of their own.

The largest number of the group (72.7%) were classroom teachers, and the majority of them taught somewhere in the elementary grades. 63.3% were holders of a bachelor of education degree; 22.7% held some other baccalaureate degree; 4.5% had a professional diploma and 9.1% had completed a master of arts degree.

Because a number of participants indicated that they had completed previous study in the area of child abuse the sample was divided into two groups to achieve some verification of results. Seven hours of training was used as the dividing point so that comparisons could be made with the Georgia group. The Calgary group divided almost equally with 45.5% having had less than seven hours and 54.5% having seven or more hours of previous training.

When asked about their professional involvement in child abuse matters 40.9% reported no professional time spent participating in the identification or treatment of physically abused or neglected children while a slightly higher 45.5% of participants reported having spent no professional time in the identification or treatment of sexually abused children or their parents. However 56.7% of participants reported that a personal acquaintance had been involved in child abuse while a total of 6.6% had had a personal experience or an experience with the abuse of a family member.

Overall the Calgary study showed a statisically significant improvement in the knowledge/information section of the questionnaire ($P < .001$). There was an improvement in opinion/attitude scores but it cannot be described as statistically significant. When examined in the light of previous training (less than 7 hours, 7 or more hours) the changes remained constant with both groups demonstrating parallel increases in both knowledge and opinions.

The researchers specifically reviewed the data collected pre and post on the Opinion questionniare. When analysing the total questionnaire the changes in scores were not statistically significant; however there were several items of particular interest. On nearly half of the questions respondents tested at or near ceiling level on the pre test.

On other individual items there was an increase in excess of 10% between pre and post measurements. Reported comfort level in presenting prevention concepts to children increased from 85% to 100% as did the self rating of ability to detect and identify sexually abused children (54% to 86%). While 99% of respondents on the post test supported prevention efforts by schools nearly two-thirds on pre and post felt that the family retained primary prevention responsibility.

In answer to the comment "Child sexual abuse is never the child's fault" 64% agreed or strongly agreed on the pre test while 90% responded similarly on the post test.

Although there was only a minimal tendency to attribute some responsibility to mothers for the child's sexual victimization the specific belief that mothers in incestuous families are usually aware that abuse is occurring was held by one-half of the respondents pre test. 90% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement post test.

Increased support was noted for child welfare and child sexual abuse treatment agencies post test. There was a puzzling decrease in comfort level to the item "I would be uncomfortable talking to a child who had been sexually abused" -- on pre test 95% disagreed or strongly disagreed to this statement while only 71% responded similarly post test. This response may be attributed to participants developing an increasing awareness of the complexity of the task as they watched, and dialogued with, experienced professionals already working in the area.

COMPARING AND CONTRASTING WITH THE GEORGIA STUDY:

There are several points of departure between the Calgary and Georgia studies that require comment. The Calgary workshop participants were volunteers who came from an unknown number of school districts. There may have been some instances of two or more teachers from a single school but it is more likely that each teacher was alone in her representation of a school. They paid a registration fee to attend the course and did so on their own time. The Calgary participants would, therefore, conform more closely to both the Joyce/ Howey/ Yarger and the Calgary In-service Project profiles than would the Georgia teachers.

The Calgary group were slightly older than the Georgia sample and a somewhat larger proportion of them were, or had been, married. A larger percentage of them were approaching the course with previous training and a larger percentage had had some sort of personal experience with child abuse.

The Calgary workshop was some 14 hours longer than the Georgia event. While this did not result in a greater relative improvement in scores with the Calgary group it is interesting to note that when controlled for the previous training variable the improvement of Calgary participants remained constant. That is, even if they had 7 or more hours of previous training they continued to make improvement in both knowledge and attitudes.

The Calgary workshop was presented in segments by a number of experts in the field, including representatives from five treatment agencies, two legal entities and a teacher/consultant, while the Georgia workshop was presented by two mental health professionals. Some of the most striking changes in knowledge scores in the Calgary study may be attributable to this variety of presenters. For example there was a marked improvement in the questions dealing with law ($P < .001$) suggesting that the presence of law enforcement officers on the instructional team may have had a particular impact.

Subsequent polling of teachers who participated in this section and other sections of the child abuse course suggested that, after a period of reflection, they still felt a need to spend more time addressing classroom management and teaching strategies focussed on the child abuse issues. This was not totally unexpected since it had been impossible to insert appropriate practice and coaching opportunities into a packed information agenda. From the available change research and staff development writings it is known that skill acquisition requires extensive practice and coaching. Additional courses in teaching strategies, group processes and classroom management are now being taught. They centre on children and sensitive issues -- such as abuse.

Teachers were given much written information to assist them in their ongoing self development efforts and to encourage them to share their new knowledge with their colleagues.

The legal and treatment agencies demonstrated consistent commitment to delivery of this course. This mutual cooperative effort assisted these helpers build intersystem understanding and respect.

It should also be reported that during each section of this course disclosures of abuse were made by participants to the instructors. Personnel involved in teaching such intense and highly emotional material need to be prepared for such incidents and ensure appropriate intervention and support.

LIMITATIONS

The Calgary study was based on a small sample nearly all of whom were female. Therefore, one must question the generalizability of the findings and whether or not gender biases exist. As well, for reasons noted previously the collection of control data was discontinued. Therefore the researchers are not in position to scientifically attribute the positive findings to the intervention. However it is believed that the Calgary sample demonstrated an improved knowledge base and a positive shift in opinion regarding child abuse issues due to the teaching effort described here.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been our long held belief that teachers would be willing partners in child abuse detection and management particularly if supplied with accurate information and knowledge about the subject and about the roles and availability of other community resources. The literature is replete with references to the necessity for teacher involvement in child abuse yet there is a paucity of information addressing how this should be accomplished. Even further limitations exist regarding the efficacy and effectiveness of various attempts designed to improve teacher confidence and competence in this area. Given the known prevalence of child neglect and physical and sexual abuse and the correlations between these childhood experiences and learning difficulties we particularly support pre-service teacher education in child abuse in addition to ongoing educational opportunities. We cannot depend on the voluntary attendance of teachers in such programs since the shifting focus of the public takes issues such as child abuse off the agenda of pressing concerns and replaces them with others such as AIDS. That does not mean that child abuse has stopped and it does not mean that we do not need teachers who are equipped to deal with it.

REFERENCES

Dougan, Pat. "Evaluating Teacher In-service in Child Abuse Detection and Intervention". (unpublished report), 1986.

Downer, Ann. "Training Teachers To Be Partners in Prevention".
In: Nelson, M.; Clark, K. (eds). The Educator's Guide to Preventing Sexual Abuse, Santa Cruz, Calif., Network Publications, 1986.

Hazzard, Ann. "Training Teachers to Identify and Intervene with Abused Children". Journal of Child Psychology, 1984, vol. 13, no. 3, 288-293.

Rogers, Lorelei M. "In-service Instructor's Manual: The In-service Project", (mimeographed), 1984.

Yarger, Sam J.; Howey, Kenneth R.; Joyce, Bruce R. Inservice Teacher Education, Palo Alto, Calif., Booksend Laboratory, 1980.